

'Assassins' B'way Hopes Killed

By GREG EVANS

NEW YORK — Weeks of backstage haggling over a Broadway transfer of Stephen Sondheim's "Assassins" bottomed out last week when some of the industry's most influential forces couldn't come to financial terms.

The transfer from off-Broadway's Playwrights Horizons to Broadway would have cost more than \$1 million, according to Michael David of Dodger Prods. Dodger had volunteered to oversee the management of the transfer, and David had organized the negotiations along with Sondheim's agent, Flora Roberts.

Sources say less than half of the \$1 million was raised, despite interest from the Shubert Organization and Geffen Music.

The Jerry Zaks-directed "Assassins," with music and lyrics by Sondheim and book by John Weidman, tells the stories of various presidential assassins and would-be assassins. The offbeat musical opened Jan. 27 at Playwrights Horizons to mostly negative reviews and ended its limited run Feb. 16.

Friction between the Shubert and Geffen camps contributed to the failed negotiations. Insiders say the music mogul balked when Shubert would not match his investment or meet his terms with regard to theater rent. At the last minute, even producer Cameron Mackintosh joined the fray in an unsuccessful attempt at peacemaking.

After several weeks, the potential

backers apparently agreed to disagree. In light of "Assassins'" mixed reviews, the negotiators lacked a commercial incentive.

"No one thought this was going to be the next 'Phantom,'" a source said. One source close to the action said the interested "egos" couldn't agree on "who was going to wear the biggest white hat."

Gerald Schoenfeld, chairman of the Shubert Organization, referred questions to David and Roberts. Roberts did not return phone calls; nor did a spokesman for Geffen.

Despite the Broadway nix, an original cast recording is being made this week and will be released by RCA Victor later this year.